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SUBJECT: GOC CONSIDERS ESTABLISHING SPECIAL COURTS FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSERS

11. (U) SUMMARY: Colombia is looking at new strategies in the war on drugs, including the creation of "drug courts" that would treat drug users as addicts in need of treatment rather than as criminals. There is no indication that this project has gone beyond the concept state at this point. END SUMMARY.

12. (U) A recent news article reported that the Colombian delegation to the forty-third meeting of Organization of American States' Inter-American Commission Against Drug Abuse (CICAD, in Spanish) announced that the Colombian Government (GOC) is studying the possibility of creating "drug courts" for drug abusers. The proposed courts, which already exist in the United States, Canada, and Chile, would direct individuals convicted of drug offenses to treatment programs rather than impose jail time.

13. (U) In closing statements at the CICAD meeting, Camilo Reyes, Colombia's Vice-Minister of Interior, admitted that the GOC historically has focused its attention on combating drug cultivation and trafficking and has ignored drug treatment and prevention, and that the creation of drug courts is an important step additional in Colombia's drug strategy.

14. (U) COMMENT: While drugs courts would be an integral part of a comprehensive national drug prevention policy, it should be noted that Colombia currently does not have any such policy, and Colombia still has no accurate statistics on drug use or abuse. The Embassy has not seen any movement that indicates this has gone beyond the conceptual stage at this point in time. END COMMENT

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